

THE SPEECH ACT OF THANKING IN EGYPTIAN ARABIC

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Chapter 1

I. Introduction

A speech act is the performance of a certain behavior, such as thanking, apology, refusal, or greeting, through words. “Speech acts are realized from culture to culture in different ways, and these differences may result in communication difficulties that range from the humorous to the serious”. (Gass and Neu 2006) Speech acts are very culture specific and people from different cultures have different norms to express their gratitude, apology, compliments, refusals, etc. These differences can result in cross-cultural stereotypes well as miscommunication among individuals.

Behm (2008) notes that on the basis of a general understanding of polite behavior, “people consider their fellow-beings as being either well-behaved and respectful or rude and ill-mannered in social interactions” (26). However, people sometimes perceive and evaluate the behavior of others from different cultures differently as sometimes being insincere and they feel that some people may “overdo their friendliness” (26).

Gass & Selinker (2008) pointed out that all “languages have a means of performing speech acts and presumably speech acts themselves are universals, yet the form used in specific speech acts varies from culture to culture”. (288). Which strongly

supports Wolfson (1986) notion that “speech acts differ cross culturally not only in the way they are realized but also in their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and in the function they serve”. (119).

Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is 1) to describe and analyze the Egyptian Arabic forms of thanking, which include repetition, and formulaic expressions that speakers of other languages might perceive it as “insincere” or “overdone friendliness”. 2) It describes the different social and discourse functions of expressing thanks in Egyptian Arabic.

Significance of the Research

Since cross cultural differences in how polite speech acts are realized can result in misunderstandings and even judgments about the sincerity of the speakers from another culture, it is important to investigate such differences in an objective way, using naturally occurring data. This paper serves as a baseline on the norms of one culture which other researchers interested in the cross cultural realization of the speech act of thanking can use for comparison with other cultures. This is especially relevant for the teaching of English to speakers of Egyptian Arabic. It will also be applicable to the teaching of Egyptian Arabic to speakers of other languages.

Several studies have been carried out to examine the norms for various speech acts and responses to them in Egyptian Arabic, such as compliment in Egyptian Arabic

(Nelson, El-Bakary, and Al-Batal, 1993) and refusal in Egyptian Arabic (Gayle, Al-Batal, and Elbakary 2001). However, none has been carried out on how expressions of gratitude are realized and performed in Egyptian Arabic.

The data in this paper shows that Egyptian Arabic speakers use different forms and strategies in expressing thanking and responses to it. Such as repetition, redundancy and plenty of formulaic expressions such as blessings and prayers in order to show sincerity and gratitude to the hearer.

Chapter 2

Background

Speech Acts

Searle (1969) argues that the “unit of linguistic communication is not the symbol, word, or sentence, but rather, the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of speech act.” (16).

Cohen (1994) points out that the successful planning and production of speech act utterances depend on the sociocultural and the sociolinguistic ability of the speaker. Cohen (1994) defines the Sociocultural ability as the respondents' skill at selecting speech act strategies appropriately with the given culture involved, “the age and sex of the speakers, their social class and occupations, and their roles and status in the interaction” (22). By Sociolinguistic ability, Cohen (1994) refers to appropriately selecting the linguistic forms or expressions that are used to realize the speech act.

Politeness Theory & Speech act of thanking

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory involves two forms of politeness: positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness strategies are active

attempts by a speaker to treat the listener respectfully and cordially in discourse. Negative politeness, on the other hand, is an attempt by the speaker to save the listener's face by engaging in some formality or restraint or by avoiding imposition on the listener.

Eisenstein and Bodman (1995) summarize two different views of "thanking" in the literature. They note that while Brown and Levinson (1986) "categorize expressing thanks as a face-threatening act in which the speaker acknowledges a debt to the hearer—thus threatening the speaker's negative face, Searle (1969), on the other hand, stresses the positive aspects of thanking, which he defines as an illocutionary act performed by a speaker based on a past act performed by the hearer that was beneficial". Consequently, the hearer feels appreciative and expresses "his appreciation in an appropriate statement". (Eisenstein & Bodman 1995, (65).

Leech (1983) (as cited in Hassan 2004) describes thanking as having a "social goal, which is to create a friendly and polite atmosphere". Leech adds that thanking is expressive since through it the addressee knows the speaker's attitude". The same concept is supported by Eisenstein & Bodman (1986 & 1995), who notes that thanking is a "language function" used in a "wide variety of interpersonal relationship" (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986 (167) and if "it is performed successfully, it brings feelings of solidarity and warmth" while, "failure to express gratitude will result in negative social results that sever the relationship between the speaker and the hearer" (Eisenstein & Bodman 1995 (65).

Ide (1998) notes that the discourse framework of a particular society in its socio-cultural specifics may alter the way in which we perceive speech acts from a more general and universal perspective, notes that while the speech act of thanking appears to be a universal function that is expressed in many languages, its pragmatic appropriateness in particular situations differ among cultures.

El-Sayed (1990), as cited in Eli Hinkel (1994) points out that thanking and responses to it in Arabic culture are utilized as a way to establish closer social relationships. “Expressing thanks establishes social reciprocity and group belonging between the speaker and the addressee”

Review of Literature

The literature is rich with empirical studies on the speech act of thanking. Some researchers focus on analyzing the functions of thanking in a specific culture, others paid more attention to the cross culture pragmatics and how speech acts as Wolfson (1986) notes “differ cross culturally not only in the way they are realized, but also in their distribution, frequencies of occurrence and the functions they serve” (119).

In his study of thanking in American English, Jung, (1994) states that it has the “effect of enhancing rapport between the interlocutors” (20). He points out that some of the “thanking” expressions in American English are extended from the basic use of the “appreciation of benefits” to have the functions of “conversational openings, stopping, leave takings and offering positive reinforcement”. (20).

Rubin (1983) investigated different uses of the phrase “thank you “ in English in Hawaii. By analyzing the natural set of data that she collected, Rubin (1983) concluded that the word “thank you” can serve other language functions besides gratitude. It might serve as a compliment or as a way to closing conversation. “One of the most common thanks that she referred to was what she called “bald” thank you, which is a quick and automatic thanks- typical of service encounter. (As cited in Eisenstein & Bodman 1986, (168).

In a study to investigate the non- native speakers ability to produce gratitude expressions with respect to the native speakers norms in English, Eisenstein & Bodman (1986) collected naturally occurring data from both American native speakers as a “baseline data”, from non-native speakers. They found that the American native speaker natural data was rich in routines and “ritualistic inclusion of certain semantic information” and that the native speakers showed consistency in their expressing of gratitude, or in another word produced “mutually- shared script” (172).

Eisenstein & Bodman (1986) also note that the native data showed a correlation between the length of thanking and the social distance between the interlocutors; the shorter thanking episodes sometimes reflected greater social distance between the speaker and the addressee. They add that the “extent of thanks was meaningful with longer speech act sets produced under conditions of social disequilibrium when the perceived need for thanking was great.” (176).

On the other hand, the authors were surprised that the high advanced non-native speakers had difficulty and poor performance in expressing gratitude in the second

language although they exhibited high proficiency in English according to the traditional measurements”. (176) Accordingly, they suggest that in order to understand the way expressing gratitude is acquired in a second language, “we need to know how this function is performed in the native language and cultures of our non native subjects” (177).

In a similar research to investigate the cultural differences in the implications of expressing thanks, Hinkel (1994) conducted an empirical study to examine the ability of 199 non-native speakers of English to judge the appropriateness of giving thanks in common situations similarly to native speakers of English. The findings of the study showed that 199 speakers of (Chinese, Arabic, Indonesian, Korean, Japanese and Spanish) ranked “expressions of thanks for appropriateness substantially differently than the 34 NSs in the control group” (14).

Hinkel (1994) added that the results showed a “great deal of consistency” in the rankings of the appropriate thanking expressions within the subjects in each native group, while there was no correlation between the rankings of subjects with different native language backgrounds” (14).

According to Coulmas (1981), expressions of thanks express the speaker’s indebtedness as a recipient of a benefit, while expressions of apologies express the speaker’s indebtedness to the hearer for having performed a harmful action to the hearer. This close relationship between apologies and thanks has especially been observed in Japanese culture where the Japanese expression “*sumimasen*” is used to express both thanking and apology.

Ide (1998) conducted an empirical study to examine the uses and function of the Japanese expression “Sumimasen”, which can function to express the feelings of both thanks and apology. Ide (1998) attempted to explain the reason why a Japanese person says “I am sorry” to express gratitude, “an inclination that can be potential source of misunderstanding between Japanese and English speakers, which makes the English speakers wonder, “why be sorry when you are grateful?” (510).

The findings of the study showed seven pragmatic functions of “sumimasen” based on data that was collected through observing 58 patients and four medical professionals in an ophthalmology clinic in Tokyo. 51 instances of “sumimasen” showed functions of quasi thanks and apology, sincere apology, request, leave taking, attention-getter, acknowledgement, and affirmative response. Ide (1998) concluded that the speech act of thanking needs “to be considered as related activities depending on the broader norms of speaking within the speech community.” (528).

Similarly, Kotani (2002) conducted a cross culture study to examine the differences between the American and the Japanese speakers in their use of the expression “I am sorry”. Kotani (2002) suggests an additional function of the expression “I am sorry” other than “taking responsibility for an offensive act or express sympathy...etc. Kotani argued that although researchers tend to treat all other functions of I am sorry as “inappropriate”, his study showed that Japanese speakers use “I am sorry” appropriately to express their mixed feelings of gratitude and indebtedness to the hearer.(66).

Chapter 3

Methodology

In collecting the data, I observed naturally occurring thanking and responses to thanking in Egyptians' everyday interactions in two neighborhoods in New York City; Bay Ridge, Brooklyn and Astoria, Queens. The study lasted for five days. I spent 8 hours everyday collecting the data. In addition to friend's houses and dinner invitations, I also visited Egyptian grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, and doctors' offices to observe and collect data. Sometimes in order to justify my wait in the store taking notes and not buying anything or interacting with anybody, I had to explain my study to the owner of the facility, noting that I was just taking notes and would not be interacting with any customer.

Interestingly, the owners of some cafes and grocery stores and some of the doctors showed their support and told me that they were very interested in the study, since they are very proud of the Egyptian culture and would like to clarify any misunderstanding about it. I also had a very nice talk with them about ways to clear any misunderstanding about the Egyptian cultures in so many other speech acts such as refusal, compliment and greetings. In regards to thanking they noted that so many times they have difficulty thanking American people in English since it is hard for them to

translate all the blessings and formulaic expressions that Egyptian usually use to express gratitude.

I collecting data, I have encountered 85 examples of thanking expressions in the Egyptians daily life interaction. Throughout the paper, I divide the occurrences of the thanking according to the functions that they serve. Following the advice of (Dr. Elizabeth Riddle) in our discussion before collecting my data, I made sure to observe as much different situations as possible since there will be several duplicates of situations. In this paper I included 25 examples that I collected in 2 grocery stores, in a waiting room of the doctor's office, the houses of 4 Egyptian friends, and 3 Egyptian restaurants.

Why New York City?

I chose the city of New York since it has many Egyptian Arabic residents. I chose two neighborhoods in New York City that are highly populated with Egyptians (Fifth Avenue in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn) and (Steinway St. in Astoria, Queens). The two neighborhoods include several Egyptian grocery stores, clothes stores, restaurants, cafes, food stands, doctor's offices, and mosques, in which all the interaction takes place in Egyptian Arabic.

Participants

The subject population is native speakers of Egyptian Arabic who live in the city of New York. The subjects were randomly chosen; during my wait in the grocery store or in a doctor's office or in a friend's house, as soon as I overhear thanking expressions, I

record the verbatim of the thanking and note the gender and the approximate age of the thanker and the giver. I include both males and females. I usually look for subjects whose age ranged from about 20 years old to about 65 years old.

Procedure

To collect data, I observed the thanking expressions in naturally occurring interactions. I recorded the information on 2 cards for documenting each encounter. The first card was to record the verbatim expressing thanking, the situation and the function of the thanking as well as a very quick and brief description of the speaker (age & gender). The second card was for recording the addressee's verbatim responses to the thanking and a brief description of his/her approximate age and gender.

My data also include expressions of gratitude that I observed and recorded while having dinner at some Egyptian friends' houses, over the phone with Egyptian friends and in couple of Egyptians doctors waiting rooms where the receptionists, the doctor and 99% of the patients are Egyptian.

When I overheard someone spontaneously thanking another and the other person replying to it, I took notes by writing the verbatim wording of the thanking and reply expressions down and recording the context of the thanking situation. When I was the one engaging in the conversation such as at a dinner party or over the phone...etc. I made sure not to do or say anything to elicit the thanking expression since I was looking for naturally occurring interactions. In some cases when people ask me why I was holding a pencil and a paper and why am I jotting down notes while we are in a birthday party for

example, I answer by explaining the significance of my research and that I need to note the verbatim wording in a natural speaking.

Chapter 4

Data analysis and Discussion

In light of the theories and empirical studies that are presented in the literature, the speech act of thanking can serve different functions varying from expressing gratitude, enhancing social reciprocity and group belonging between the speaker and the addressee” (as cited in Hinkel 1994), expressing gratitude and indebtedness (Clankie 1998; Kotani 2008; Ide1998) and can also serve as conversational openings, stopping, leave takings and offering positive reinforcement”. (Jung 1994; Rubin 1983).

My data from the Egyptians daily interaction supports the previous researches describing the various functions of expressing gratitude in Egyptian Arabic. I divide the functions of thanking through out the paper into four categories: appreciation of benefit appreciation of benefit, opening and close a conversation, an attention grabber, leave taking as Jung(1994) ; Rubin(1983) ; Ide (1998) and indebtedness Kotani (2002)

However, their “distribution and frequencies of occurrence” (Wolfson 1986, 119), forms, rituals and formulaic expressions seem different from other cultures.

In the following section, I will discuss the functions of thanking and responses to it in Egyptian Arabic according to my data. In the next section I will discuss and analyze

the formulaic expressions and rituals that are used by Egyptians to serve the different functions of thanking.

The following chart explains the number of examples and they are categorized according to the function that each one serves.

The functions of Thanking	Number of Occurrences
1- Appreciation of Benefit:	
1) Dinner	9
2) Ride	3
3) Gift	9
4) Miscellaneous (over the phone, grocery store)	15
2- Opening a conversation	5
3- closing a conversation	8
4- Leave taking	32
Total	81

As the previous chart shows, appreciation of benefit serves the major and basic function of thanking and presents 36 examples of the entire data by itself. The Leave-taking function presents the next big category in the chart since it presents 32 examples of the whole data. On the other hand, opening and closing a conversation present only 13 example of the entire data.

Functions of Thanking

In analyzing data, I divide the examples of thanking expressions into four categories that serve as different functions of the thanking: Appreciation of benefit, opening a conversation, closing a conversation and leave taking. Under the appreciation of benefit category, there are 4 situations or contexts in which the thanking take place: Dinner invitation in a friend's house, giving a gift to a friend in a birthday party or during dinner invitation, giving a ride to someone, or offering a physical help to carry groceries in a grocery store.

1. Appreciation of Benefit

It is interesting to note that appreciation of benefit serves as the most important function in expressing gratitude in our data. I have divided this category into 4 subdivisions in which the thanker expresses his/her gratitude for 1) dinner treat, 2) getting a ride, 3) getting a gift, 4) help customers in carrying out their groceries to the car.

1- Context: the following example takes place in a friend's house. (A) is female approximately in her mid 30s, having dinner with her family in the house of another Egyptian family. (A) thanks (B) for the great hospitality and the nice dinner.

Guest:

Motshakerren gedan, teslaam eedek, taabnaaki maana.

thank we very, peace hands, tired you with us,

Rabena yekremek. mesh aarfa akool eih!

God generous you. No know say what!

‘Thanks a lot, bless your hands, I am sure you put a lot of effort in this, may God reward you for this, I can’t thank you enough!’

Hostess:

Elaafo ala eih, Abadan walahee ana maamaltesh ai

welcome, on what, No way, I swear to God I no did any

haga, da ento sharaftoona elnaharda!

thing, this you honored us the today.

‘You are welcome, what are you thanking me for? I didn’t do anything, we are really honored by your visit today.’

In the last two example, (A) values and appreciates the big dinner that (B) made for (A) and her family. In expressing her gratitude to the hostess, the guest uses several strategies to show the sincerity of their thanking. It is clear that the thanking form is very lengthy since it includes repetition and redundancy such as: “ Thank you very much” “ I can’t thank you enough”. One can also notice the use of the formulaic expressions and blessings: “ Bless your hands”.

The following example takes place in an Egyptian restaurant in Bay ridge Brooklyn. A’s family is treating B’s family for dinner at the restaurant. A and B are friends and decided to go out have dinner together in that restaurant.

2- Context: (A) is female approximately in her late 40s and B is a female in her mid 40s.

(A) and her family is attending the dinner with (B) and her family.

(B) motshakereen awi awi, mesh aarfeen nokool lokom eih
 thank we very very, no know we say for you what
 ala elozoma elgameela di. Ozomaa raeeaa felaa! elmara
 on the (treat) (the) strong this. Treat wonderful really. The one
 elgaya lazem tesharaffona baa aw law teheboo, neegi
 next must you honore us then or if you like we come
 fi nafs elmakan daa.
 in same the place this.

‘Thank you very very much, we really don’t know how to thank
 you for this great dinner treat. What a wonderful dinner! Next time
 it is on us, you have to come to our house and the honor will be
 ours, or if you prefer we can come to the same place here’.

(A) Elaafu Elaafu alaa eih! alhamdolilah in elmakan
 Welcome, welcome. For what! Thank God that the place
 aagabkoo. La shokr ala wageb, da into ahl elkaram koloh.
 Like you. No thank on duty, this you family generous all.

‘You are more than welcome, you don’t need to thank us. Thank
 God that you like the place. Don’t thank us for something that we
 have to do. Generosity is your famous trait’.

In the last example it is clear that the guests benefited from the hosts and they
 really appreciate the dinner treat and try to express their gratitude to the hosts by using
 several strategies. In this situation, the guests felt overwhelmed by the hosts’ generosity

and they also expressed their gratitude by the use and repetition of “very”. They also felt in debt and offered the hosts an invitation for a future dinner at the guest’s house or in the same place in which they were eating.

The responses to the thanking expressions also approximately matched the length and redundancy of the thanking expression. In (1) and (2) the benefactor used the word (*elafoo* ‘thank you’) which represents the very basic polite expression that Egyptians use to accept the response to thanking in Arabic. Then the benefactors followed the thanking by denying the benefit. They either try to be modest and say that they didn’t make any effort or by complimenting the thankers and mentioning cases in which the former benefited from the latter.

The following example takes place inside the car between two female neighbors. (A) is giving (B) a ride to her work.

3) Context: (A) is a 35 year old female driving her car to work one morning when she saw her neighbor (B) a female in her late 30s waiting at the bus stop, A offered (B) a ride to her job, which is close to (A)’s work. (B) accepted and as soon as she got in the car she started expressing her gratitude to (B) saying:

(B) Motshakera awi, rabena yekremek, ana hatebek maaya we
 thank (I) very, God reward you, I will tired you with me and
 hataalek aan shoghlek. Walahee ana mesh aarfa ashkorek ezai,
 delay you from work you. Iswear I not know thank you how,
 wafarti alaya wakt taweel.
 Saved you on me time long.

‘Thanks a lot, May God reward you for this. I am afraid I will take up your time and effort and make you late for your work.

I swear to God I don’t know how to thank you enough, this ride saved me a long time of waiting at the bus stop.

- (A) Elafo ala eih mafeesh atalaa wala haga, inti kedah kedah fi welcome, on what, no delay or thing, you this this in tareeki. Ai wakt mehtaga feeh tawseela kalemini elsobh wa ana way mine. Any time need you in ride, call me the morning and I aadi akhdek , ok?
pass pick you ok?

‘You’re welcome, you don’t need to thank me, and I am not late or anything, your job is on my way anyway. Anytime you need a ride, just give me a call in the morning and I will pick you up. Ok?’

In the previous example, (B) values and appreciates the ride that (A) is offers her to work since she saves her time waiting for the bus. Although both females have been neighbors for long time, (A) is not taking her neighbor’s ride for granted, and she has a feeling of indebtedness towards the benefactor (B). The thanker expresses her appreciation of benefit starting by the routine formulaic expression (‘you’re welcome’) and then she used a blessing (‘may God reward you for this act’) to show her sincerity in thanking her neighbor. These expressions were followed by a comment stating the reason of her indebtedness. (‘I made you late to work’). In fact, the thanker is saying this sentence in order to be polite and inform the hearer that she understands and appreciates her effort and is not taking it for granted.

In this example, the response to the thanking includes three strategies: 1) acceptance of the thanking as in ('you are welcome'), 2) denial of the fact that she was being inconvenienced by any chance. ('your job is in my way anyway'), and 3) offering a future help ('Anytime you need a ride, just give me a call in the morning and I will pick you up.')

The following example takes place in the house of an Egyptian friend at the end of the birthday party.

4- Context: At the end of the birthday party (A) was waiting to her husband to pick her up. The husband called and said that his car was broken down and he wouldn't be able to pick his wife up from the birthday party, and asked her to take a cab. (B), the hostess offered (A) a ride home instead of taking a cab. (A) accepted the ride and is now thanking the hostess.

(A) ana assfa gedan gedan, taabtookom maaya. Mesh aarfa akool

I sorry very very, bothered you with me. Don't know I say

eih, ana motshakera gedan, rabena yekremkom.

What, I thank very, God our reward you.

'I am very very sorry for bothering you. I don't know what to say, thank you so much, God bless you'.

(B) elafoo ala eih? Abadan walahee, mafeesh taab wala ai haga. Da welcome, on what? No I swear no tired or any thing. This hata elgaw bara gameel elela di. even weather out beautiful the night this.

‘You’re welcome, don’t mention it. You’re not a bother at all. The weather is even nice tonight’.

In (4) the thanker again is overwhelmed with gratitude. She has the indebtedness feeling towards the hostess who offers her the ride. It is a very typical Egyptian attitude to feel very grateful to the giver even to the point of feeling in debt, and consequently this indebtedness influences the thanker’s choice of the linguistic strategies to express his gratitude. The thanker uses several strategies to express her appreciation, indebtedness and gratitude to the hearer.

Similar to the Japanese use of “sumimasen” to express mixed feelings of gratitude and indebtedness (Ide, 1998 and Kotani, 2002), Egyptians frequently use the apology phrase (‘I am sorry’) to express the dual effect of indebtedness and gratitude.

It is worth mentioning that in my data, apology phrases are used only in the appreciation of benefit and leave taking categories. The data shows that out of 81 examples of expressing gratitude, 32% examples of apology phrases are identified.

In the previous example, the thanker didn’t commit any act that she needs to apologize for, but she uses the phrase: (‘I am very very sorry’) as her first strategy to express her gratitude to the hearer for giving her a ride.

In addition to the apology strategy, the form of thanking includes a blessing to express gratitude: (‘God bless you’) in order to show her sincerity in appreciation. Another strategy that the thanker uses is the repetition to show sincerity (‘thank you so much’) and (‘I don’t know what to say’).

The following example takes place at a birthday party, (A) and (B) are two female friends, and (B) thanks (A) for the birthday gift.

5- Context: Two females (A) is a female approximately in her late 40s thanking her friend (B), a female about the same age for getting her daughter a birthday gift.

(A) Teslaam eidek, motshakera awi awi taabti nafsek
 peace hand yours thank very very bothered yourself
 manetheremsh menek, teeshi we tegeebi [calling her daughter]
 No separate from (you), live and bring. [calling her daughter]
 taali kooli shukran letant.
 come tell you thank for tant.

‘Bless your hand, thank you very very much, you didn’t
 have to do that, bless your heart, hope you live
 longer and always be generous to people. [Calling her
 daughter]: Come and say thank you to aunt.’

(B) elafoo ala eih? di haga baseeta awi, yarab teegebha .
 welcome, on what? It thing simple very, God, liked her
 Rabena yebarek lokom feha.
 God bless for you in her.

‘you are welcome, don’t mention it. Hope she likes the gift.

God bless her for you.’

In the previous example, one can notice that the thanking includes more than one strategy: 1) the formulaic expression and blessings (‘bless your hand’), (‘Hope you live longer’) (‘bless your heart’). The form of the thanking is also lengthy and includes repetition of blessings, which reflects the thanker desire to show sincere gratitude to the giver.

The following example takes place in a friend’s house. (A) and visits (B) in her house for the first time, and she brings a cake along with her.

6) Context: Two females. (A) is a female in her late 30s and (B) is approximately the same age. (B) appreciates the cake that (A) brings along with her, while the guest says that it is nothing.

(B) Shukran Gazeelan, taabti nafsek, makanshi looh lozoom. Teslaam

Thanks very, bothered yourself, no was for reason. (Peace your)

eidek. Feelan ihna beheeb keket elshokolata.

hand. Really love we cake the chocolate.

‘Thank you very much, you didn’t have to do that. Bless your hand.

We really love chocolate cake’.

(A) Ala eih? Abadan walahee, di haga baseeta awi. Haga teksef

On what? No God, this thing simple very. Thing ashamed

Lelaasaf Amreica mafehash gheer elkeekat elsoghayara di, mesh zai

Unfortunately America no there the cakes the small this, no like
elkeek eli fi masr.
(the cakes) which in Egypt.

‘Thanks for what, I swear this is really nothing; it made us ashamed
of ourselves. Unfortunately, in America they have only these
small cakes, not like the big ones we have in Egypt’.

In the above example, the two females are not close friends. They have known each other for only a short time. The thanking is lengthy and includes the formulaic expressions and repetition that show sincerity of gratitude.

The response to the thanking is fairly lengthy as well. The responder uses more than one strategy: 1) denial: the giver denies any benefit that she did to the thanker, 2) comment: an explanation of the situation (unfortunately, in America they have only these small cakes).

In this example, both the thanker and the giver use the typical forms of thanking and responses. For example, the thanker uses a lengthy thanking as result of using different strategies: 1) formulaic expressions and blessings (‘peace your hand’). (‘thank you very much’) 2) acknowledgment of inconvenience to other (‘you bothered yourself’) 3) denial of necessity (‘you didn’t have to’). (Similarly, the giver uses a lengthy response as a

result of: 1) denial: ('thanks for what'), ('this is nothing') ('it made me ashamed of ourselves')

The following example takes place in a friend's house between two male friends. They are both around the same age approximately in their mid 40s.

7- Context: Two males. (A) is thanking (B) for pastries that he brought along with him while visiting (A)'s house.

(A) Shukran gazeelan, maloosh lozoom walahee.

Thanks very, no need by God.

'Thank you very much, I swear you didn't have to do that.'

(B) Elaafoo ala eih? Di haga baseeta.

welcome, on what? This thing simple.

'You are welcome, don't mention it, it is nothing'.

In (7), the thanking between the two males is shorter than in the other examples discussed above. It includes the fixed formulaic expression ('thank you very much') and ('you didn't have to') and the response includes the acceptance ('you are welcome) and denial ('it is nothing').

Although the example shows a shorter form of thanking, it still expresses sincere gratitude and appreciation. In this example, the thanker and the responder are two males,

and my data shows that males don't use as much repetition as females do in thanking and responses to thanking.

The following example takes place in a birthday party to show the appreciation of the benefit of a gift.

8- Context: (A) is a male approximately in his mid 40s, thanking (B) a female in her late 30s for coming to his daughter birthday party and bringing her a toy. (A) and (B) see each other for the first time.

(A) Shukran gazeelan, maloosh lozoom walahee, shukran.

Thanks very, no it necessary I swear, thanks.

'Thanks a lot, I swear you didn't have to do that. Thanks.'

(B) Elaafoo ala eih. Di haga baseeta. Kol sana

welcome, on what. This thing simple. Every year

we heya tayeba.

and she good.

'You are welcome. Don't mention. It's nothing. Happy

birthday to her.'

In the previous example, it is quite clear that although the thanker appreciates the gift that the (B) got for his daughter, his thanking is not as lengthy compared with other

examples. It doesn't include any blessings. Instead, the thanker uses the routine formulaic ('thank you very much') at the beginning of the sentence and repeats it again at the end of the sentence: 'Thanks'.

Similarly, in the response to the thanking, the giver uses the typical strategies: acceptance ('you are welcome') and denial ('don't mention it, this is nothing'), and she doesn't use any blessings or repetition.

It is interesting to note that although in examples (5) and (8) the contexts are the same: The daughter's birthday party and the thankers express their gratitude to the giver for getting their daughter a birthday gift, the thanking and the response forms in the two examples are different. One can notice that in (5) the thanker and the givers were two females, the form of thanking is quite lengthy since it includes three blessings in one turn: ('bless your hand'), ('bless your heart'), ('hope you live longer and always be generous to people'). It is also repetitive in the sense that it includes the word (very) two times: ('thank you very very much'), and ('you didn't have to do that'). Interestingly, the response relatively matched the thanking form in length.

In (8), the thanker is a male and the giver is a female. In this situation, the thanking and the response form is quite shorter and doesn't include any blessings, which follows the social norms of speech between a male and female who are not close friends or are not related.

The following example takes place in another birthday party like in 8, except the thanker and the giver are from different gender and age group.

9- Context: (A) is a female in her late 40s and (B) the giver is in her late 30s.

- (A) Teslam eidak, motshakereen awi, mallosh lozoom walahee.
 peace your hand, thank we very, no need necessary I swear.
 ‘Bless your hand, thank you very much, you didn’t have to do that.’
- (B) Elafoo ala eigh. Haga baseeta. Kol sana we into tayebeen.
 welcome, on what. Simple thing. Every year you good.
 ‘You are welcome, this is nothing. Happy birthday to you guys’.

In the last example, the situation is the same as in (8) but the thanker here is a female and the giver is a female. Although the thanking form is not as lengthy as other examples, the female thanker uses the blessings (‘bless your hand’), which seems to be a typical strategy that female thankers use in most of the examples.

The response includes typical acceptance (‘you are welcome’) and denial (‘this is nothing’).

The context of the following example is a bit different from previous examples. It takes place in a grocery store in which there is a great social distance and there isn’t any acquaintance between that thanker and the giver.

10- Context: In a small grocery store, (A) is a male approximately in his mid 30s working in the store helping (B) a female in her late 30s to carry out her groceries to the car.

(B) Teslam eidak, motshakera awi. Shukran gazeelan.

peace your han, thank I very. Thanks a lot.

Bless your hand, thanks a lot. Thanks a lot.

(A) ala eih taht amrek ya madam, ai khedmaa Tanya?

on what, under your service madam, any service else?

‘Don’t mention it, at your service madam, is there anything else I can help you with?’

In the last example, it is interesting to note that there are many factors that affect the thanking and the response form: 1) it is between a male and a female, 2) there is no close social relationship since it is a formal situation between the customer and the bag boy, However, the female thanker uses a blessing (‘bless your hand’), and repetition, (‘thanks a lot, thanks a lot’) to express her gratitude to the worker. The responder uses a typical response strategy: 1) denial, (don’t mention it), 2) offering further help (is there anything else I can help you with?)

The thanking and response in this situation is not as lengthy as in other examples. The data shows that the distant relation between the female thanker and the male responder in this formal situation results in a shorter and a kind of formal thanking.

The following example takes place in the same grocery store as in example 10

11- Context: The same grocery store in example 10, (A) is a male bagger approximately in his mid 30s, helping (B) a female approximately in her late 60s to carry out her groceries to the car.

(B) Teslam eidaak rabena yekremak taabtak maaya
 peace hand your, God reward you tired you with me
 ya ibni. alf hukr, rabena yekhaleek
 son. Thousands thanks, God keep you

‘Bless your hands, May God reward you, I feel like I really
 bothered you son. Thanks a million. Hope you live a long
 healthy life.

(A) elaafoo ya haga, taht amrek. Ai khedmaa Tanya?
 welcome haga under service you. Any service other?

‘you are welcome haga, I am at your service, is
 there anything else I can help you with?’

In this example, the thanker is an old lady approximately in her late 60s thanking a male bagger in his 20s. Although the context is similar to example 10, the thanking form is a little different. I suggest that this is because of the age factor. The thanker in this example uses repetitive thanking and blessings to express her gratitude even though there isn't close social relationship and the act is part of the bagger's job to help her out, yet, she appreciates his act and feels the need to acknowledge it. It is interesting to note that formulaic expressions and blessings such as ('hope you live longer') and ('may God reward you') are typical forms of thanking that women and men approximately in their 60s and above usually use.

On the other hand, (B) the male bagger, doesn't use the same blessings and formulaic expressions in his response to the thanking; instead, he uses the routine strategies of 1) acceptance: (you're welcome) and 2) offering further help (is there anything else I can help you with?).

The word "haga" is a term of address originally used to describe a person who has had the chance to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. This is one of the pillars of the Islamic religion. Every Muslim has to do this pilgrimage at least once in his life if he can afford it. However, in Egyptian culture, people typically address older people with the term "hag" for males and "haga" for females to express their respect to the elderly, even though sometimes the speaker doesn't know if the addressee is Muslim or not.

The following example takes place in the same grocery store as in example 11. (A) is a male bagger and (B) is a male customer.

12- Context: (A), the male bagger asks (B), the male customer if he needs help carrying out his groceries to the car.

(A) teheb asheel elhaga maak lelarabeya?

you love I carry the things with you to the car ?

‘Do you need any help carrying this out?’

(B) la shukran. Alf shukr.

No thanks. Thousands thank.

‘No thanks. Thanks a lot’.

(A) Ai khedma ya beih.

Any service sir.

Any time, sir!

In this example, the bagger offers to help the customer carry out the groceries to his car, but he didn’t perform the action and the customer didn’t benefit any thing from the bagger, yet the customer’s response to the offer was in the form of thanking. The thanking form is short, yet repetitive. Although the customer didn’t benefit from the bagger, he shows his appreciation of the offer of help with the thanking.

Similarly, the bagger’s response is short. He uses two strategies: 1) acceptance, and 2) offering help.

The last example shows the male-male interaction in a formal situation in which the thanking is short and doesn't include any repetition.

The following examples are also in the appreciation of benefit category. They take place in a doctor's office in Brooklyn, NY, in which the doctor and the staff are Egyptian and 99% of the patients are Egyptians living in New York City. The examples show the different strategies that the patients use in expressing their gratitude to the doctor after examining them and giving them prescriptions. The examples take place by the front desk while the doctor is writing a prescription or giving a referral to the patients. In the three examples the doctor is a middle-aged male Egyptian physician.

13- Context: (A) is a middle -aged female expressing her gratitude to (B) the doctor for taking care of her.

(A) alf shuukr ya doctor, rabena yekremak walahee. Mesh arfeen men
thousands thanks doctor, God reward you swear I. No know with
gheerak kona hanemel eigh. Rabena yegazeek aana kheer.
you out was will do what. God reward you for us good.
‘Thanks a million doctor, God bless you and reward you. We don’t
know how can we do it without you. May God reward you the best
for taking care of us.’

(Doctor) la abadan, elaafoo, elaafoo.

No, never. welcome, welcome.

‘Don’t mention it. You’re welcome, you’re welcome.’

In this example, a middle-aged female patient expresses her gratitude and appreciation to the doctor in a lengthy form of thanking. The patient uses three different strategies: 1) routine thanking (‘thanks a million’) 2) repetition of blessings, (‘may God reward you’) (‘may God reward you the best for taking care of us’). On the other hand, although the doctor’s response is short and doesn’t include any of the blessings and repetitions, it is appropriate that the patient would understand that the doctor is busy and has other patients to take care of.

The following example takes place in the same doctor’s office between (A) a female approximately in her late 60s, and the male doctor.

14- Context: (A) a female patient approximately in her late 60s thanks the doctor for taking care of her. The patient thanks the doctor while he is writing the prescription on the front desk.

(A) alf alf shukr ya doctor, rabena yekremak we yebareklak,
 thousands thousands thanks doctor, God reward and bless you
 manetheremsh menaak Abadan. Rabena yegaal elsheffaa al edek

you no separate from you never. God make cure on hand your
dayman.

always.

‘Doctor, thanks a million, thanks a million. May God reward you
and bless your heart, May we always have you with us. May God
make you always cure people’.

(Doctor)

Elafoo ya haga, rabena yekremek, kefaya eldawetee

welcome haga, God reward-you, enough the –two- prayers
elhelween dool.

the beautiful these.

‘You’re welcome haga, May God reward you. Those beautiful
blessings and prayers are all I need’.

In this example, the patient’s thanking is obviously quite lengthy and according to my data is considered a typical form of thanking used by females over age 50. I suggest that the age and the gender play an important role in thanker choice of the strategies that she uses to express her gratitude in the sense that she uses three different strategies: 1) repetition of the routine form of thanking (‘thanks a million’) (‘thanks a million’) 2) use of blessings (‘may God reward you’) (‘may God bless your hand’) (‘may God make you always cure people’). The repetition of these blessings is very typical for either a

male or a female of this age category to a younger age person, and such blessings are very appreciated from the hearer as shown in the doctor's response.

It is interesting to note the difference in the doctor's response in examples 13 and 14. Although the doctor responded briefly and in a routine form to the middle-aged female patient in 13, he elaborated in his response to the female patient (above 50) in example 14. Following the social norms in dealing with the elderly in the Egyptian culture, the example shows that doctor uses three in responding to the old female patient. In this example, the thanking form is rather lengthy compared with example 13 since the doctor uses more than one strategy in his response.

1) acceptance, ('you are welcome'), 2) terms of address of respect (haga), which shows respect from the speaker to the old aged addressee. 3) blessings ('May God reward you'). 4) compliment, he complimented her blessings and prayers with the adjective (beautiful) ('those beautiful blessings and prayers are all I need') in order to acknowledge her lengthy and special thanking.

The 14 previous examples represent the first and the basic function of the thanking expressions in my paper; " appreciation of benefit" which represents 44% of my data.

2. Conversation Opener

Analysis of the data reveals other functions of thanking in addition to appreciation of benefit. Similar to Ide (1998) and Jung (1994), who investigated the thanking expressions in the Japanese culture, expressing gratitude in Egyptian Arabic may serve as a conversation opener. In the following examples, the conversation takes

place in different places such as a friend's house, at the grocery store, over the phone with a friend, and at the mosque.

The following example takes place at a small grocery store owned by a family where the customer opens the conversation with the store owner, as soon as he enters the store by commenting with thanks on the good quality of meat that he purchased in his last visit to the store.

15- Context: (A) is a middle aged male customer approximately in his 40s thanking (B), the storeowner, a male approximately in his late 50s for the good quality of meat that he purchased in his last visit.

(A) Ya aam motshakereen ala ellahma elgameela betaaet elmaraa eli
uncle thank we on the meat the good belong the once that
faatet. Yaree t kol mara nakhod lahma helawa keda!
last. Hope every time take us meat good like!
'Hey there, thanks, we enjoyed the good quality of the meat that we
purchased last time. Hope it is the same good quality every time'.

(B) alf hana we shefaa. Taht amrak ya beih. Alhmndo lilah inha
thousands joy and cure. Under service you sir. Thank God
inaha agabetkom.
that it like you.

‘Enjoy it, I am at your service sir. Thank God you liked it.’

(A) alhamdo lila. taeb alaee andak fool elaab fool belkhaltaa

thank God. Anyway find at you fava cans with mix

elmasry?

the Egyptian?

‘Thank God...anyway, do you have those cans of fava beans cans with the Egyptian mix?’

In this example, although the customer is in the store to buy the fava beans cans, he wanted to open a conversation with a small chat and a warm up before asking about the fava beans. In his first turn, (A) thanks (B) the owner using the routine form of thanking (thanks) and commenting with a compliment on the meat’s quality.

It is interesting to note that the thanking form here is very basic and doesn’t include any repetition or blessings. In this situation, the customer doesn’t need to express his sincere gratitude to the owner since giving him good meat should be taking for granted. Instead, the customer’s intention was to open with small talk, grab the owner’s attention and also maybe acknowledge the storeowner in order to establish a good customer relationship with him.

In his response to the thanking and the compliment, the owner uses the following strategies: 1) a blessing (*belhana welshefaa* ‘with joy and cure’) which is a formulaic

expression that is usually used in restaurants while or after people eat their food, which is similar to the American expression “*enjoy it*” or the French “*Bon Appétit*”.

2) offering future help (any time, sir). After the thanking and the responses to thanking, the customer starts to ask whether the owner carries the canned fava beans, which is his main reason for coming to the store.

The following example takes place over the phone between (A) a female friend in her late 30s and (B) a female her mid 30s. (A) opens the conversation over the phone by thanking (B) on having a good time shopping the other day with her in the mall.

16- Context: Two females over the phone.

(A) Eih elakhbar amalaa eigh? Ya seti merci ala elwakt elgameel
 what’s news, making what? Madam, merci on the time beautiful
 betaa embareh, ana itbasaat awi walahee.
 belong yesterday, I enjoyed very I swear.
 ‘Hey, what’s going on? Dudette, thanks for the good times we spent
 together yesterday, I really had too much fun’.

(B) feelaan, elwahed etbasaat gedan, yareet neemelhaa tani.
 really, one has fun very, hope make it again.
 ‘Seriously, that was fun, hope we can do it again.’

Akeed. Baoolek eih, ana ayza asaalek ala trekat elmahshi eli

sure. I tell you what, I want ask you on way grapes that
 eli kolteeli aleha embareh. Eih elmakadeer belzabt?
 that told me you on yesterday. What the ingredients exactly?

‘Sure. You know what, I am calling to ask you about the
 recipe to fix the grape leaves that we were talking about
 yesterday. What are the exact ingredients for it?’

In this example, (A) calls (B) over the phone for a specific reason that is to ask about the recipe to fix the grape leaves dish. Instead of starting the call with that question, (A) initiates the conversation with small talk thanking (B) for the good time they spent together at the mall. It is interesting to note that both (A) and (B) had already thanked each other the other day after they finished shopping in the mall, and also that (A) doesn’t owe (B) any specific gratitude or appreciation of any benefit; they both benefited from each other in the sense that they enjoyed having company in the mall.

Thus, the function of thanking that (A) uses at the beginning of the phone call is to open the conversation and warm up with small talk before getting into the main reason for her call.

One can notice that the form of the thanking in this example shows some lexical differences from the other thanking examples. 1) In this example, (A) uses the French word (*merci*), which is being used quite normally in middle and upper classes in Egypt, instead of the Egyptian equivalent (*Shukran*). Many middle and upper class families in

Egypt send their children to international schools to learn foreign languages and the kids get used to code switching between Arabic and their foreign language.

2) (A) uses the word “dudette” which reflects the close relationship between her and (B). it is obvious that this example shows that the thanker use no blessings, or repetition in her thanking. I suggest that this is because the main function of the thanking isn’t to express sincere gratitude or a feeling of indebtedness, but instead, to open the conversation.

3.Closing a Conversation

In this section, I argue that thanking also servres as the discourse function of closing a conversation. In his analysis of American English thanking data, Jung (1994) found out that using thanking expression in opening and closing a conversation is more frequently used in “ one- to-many relationships” and in situations such as formal addresses, special lectures, conferences or TV shows.

In contrast, my data shows that thanking expressions are used as a conversational closing in situations such as at a friend’s house, after dinner invitation, and over the phone to signal closing the of a conversation. They can be used in either one-to-one, or one to many situations.

17- Context: The following example takes place in a friend’s house between (A), a guest is a female in her late 30s who is getting ready to leave the house, standing by the door,

when she starts a small talk with (B), the hostess a female approximately in her mid 30s.

After finishing the conversation, (A) says:

- (A) Tayeb, ana lazem amshi baa, shukran (ya kamar), rabena yekremek
 ok, I have leave then, Thanks moon, God (reward you)
 ala elaadah elhelwa di. Ana itbassat awi walahee. Shukran ya
 on (the sitting) the beautiful this. I enjoy very (I swear). Thanks
 gameel
 beautiful.
 ‘Ok, I have to go now, thanks honey, May God reward you for that
 nice chat and coffee. I swear I enjoyed it. Thanks, honey’.

- (B) Ala eih da inti nawarteeni, mashya alatool leeh? manti aadaa
 on what this you lighten me, leaving straight why? You stay.
 ‘Don’t mention it, you made my day too, why are you leaving so
 soon? Stay a little more’.

In this example, one can note that the thanking serves as both an expression of gratitude and to close of a conversation at the same time. Although (A) thanks (B) for the coffee and chat in the middle of the visit, she still needs to signal the closing of the conversation and that she is getting ready to leave. The form of thanking doesn’t differ much from the form of thanking in the appreciation of benefit category. In this example, the thanker uses the strategies such as 1) repetition (‘thanks honey’) (‘thanks honey’),

2) blessing ('may God reward you'), 3) the use of the word (*honey* ' *kamar*') to show friendship and solidarity.

Interestingly, the response to the thanking is quite lengthy including the strategies of 1) denial "don't mention it" 2) a comment indicating that the hostess has appreciated the visit too ('I had fun too') 3) offering further hospitality "stay a little more".

The following example takes place in the hallway of an apartment building between two neighbors.

18- Context: (A) is a male approximately in his late 50s closing a conversation with his male neighbor who is in his late 40s.

Arabic (A) khalas ya aam ana hatsaraf fi elmawdoo dah. Mashi, neshoofak ala
 ok uncle I will work in the subject this. going, see you on
 kheir, alf shukr.
 good, thousand thanks.
 'Ok sir I will take care of this issue, ok, hope we hear good things
 about you, thanks a million.'

(B) rabena yekremak, neshofkom ala kehir, alf salama.
 God reward you, see you on good. Thousand goodbye.
 May God reward you, hope to hear good about you, take
 care.

In this example, the function of the thanking by (A) is to close the conversation between the two neighbors. (A) didn't benefit from (B), so he didn't express gratitude. Instead, (A) just tries to close the conversation in a polite way. The thanking is not as lengthy as the examples in the appreciation of benefit category 1-14 for example. (A) simply uses one strategy, a routine thanking formulaic expression ('thanks a million').

The hearer uses the same strategies as the thanker in his response to the thanking 1) a blessing ('May God reward you') and a good wish ('hope to hear good about you') to accept the thanking and help to close the conversation.

3. Leave Taking

My data shows that thanking expressions may be used to serve as leave taking expressions. In my data I encountered 32 examples out of 81 of thanking to that serve as expressions of leave taking. It is important to note that leave taking examples differ from closing the conversation in the sense that, the examples of closing a conversation usually take place between people that already know each other and are chatting or engaging in a small talk and using the thank you expressions to signal a polite closing to the conversation. On the other hand, leave taking examples usually take place in a formal situations or business such as in grocery stores, service encounters, and doctor's office.

Most of the time, the customer thanks the cashier or the receptionist before they leave the place. In some instances, the function of the thank you expression serves as both appreciation of benefit and leave taking as well; for example, at the front desk in the doctor's office, sometimes the patients feel thankful that the receptionist squeezed them

in and they use the thanking as a polite way to express gratitude and as a leave taking as well. In other examples, the thanking expressions are being used only to serve as a sign to indicate a leave taking and usually are not as lengthy as other examples.

The following example takes place at the front desk of the doctor's office between the receptionist and the patient.

19- Context: the receptionist is a female approximately in her late 40s and the patient is a male approximately in his late 30s. The patient is about to leave the desk after getting his appointment card from the receptionist.

(patient) shukran gazelan, maa elsalama.
 thanks very, with peace.
 'Thanks a lot, good bye'.

(receptionist) elafoo, maa elsalamaa.
 welcome, with the peace.
 'You're welcome, good bye'.

Here the thanking expression serve as a signal of expressing gratitude to the receptionist, although it is a part of her job to assist the patient, and as a leave- taking expression at the same time. It is very obvious that the thanking form is different in length from other examples. The thanker uses a very basic formulaic expression ('thanks

a lot'), and no repetition or blessing. The response to the thanking is also quite short and includes the routine basic response ('you're welcome'), which matches the formal relationship between the receptionist and the patient.

The following examples take place in the grocery store between the cashier and the customers while the customers are ready to leave after they have paid for their merchandise and take their receipts.

20- Context: the customer is a female in her mid 40s putting the change in her purse and ready to leave the store. The cashier is a male in his late 20s.

(customer) motshakera awi.
 thank I very.
 'Thanks a lot'.

(cashier) Ai khedma.
 any service.
 'Any time'.

21- Context: in a grocery store, the customer is a male approximately in his late 40s and the cashier is a male approximately in his late 20s.

(customer) shukran.
 thanks.
 'Thanks'.

(cashier) sharaftena, alf salama.
 honored us, thousands safety.
 ‘Our pleasure, take care’.

In the two previous examples, the thanking serves as a leave- taking signal and a way to acknowledge the cashier before leaving the store. The customers in both examples use the very basic routine word (‘thanks’) (‘thanks a lot’) to signal their leave. None of the customer use blessings, repetition or a lengthy thanking, instead the thanking is quite short in both examples.

In responding to the thanking, the cashier answers with either offering future help as in 20 (‘anytime’), or with acceptance to the thanking as in 21, (‘my pleasure’). In both situations the response was short and the cashier accepts the customer’s thanking.

I have shown that the thanking expressions may extend from their basic category of ‘appreciation of benefit’ to serve as a leave-taking signal in some situations.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this paper shows the different functions of expressing gratitude and responses to it in Egyptian Arabic. Throughout the paper, the data shows that the functions of the thanking expressions in Egyptian Arabic coincide with previous research in the literature on thanking in other languages. These functions include appreciation of benefit, opening and close a conversation, leave-taking (Jung 1994; Rubin 1983; Ide 1998) and indebtedness (Kotani 2002; Ide 1998).

On the other hand, the data also shows that the forms of thanking in Egyptian Arabic differ significantly from those of English and probably those of some other cultures in particular ways. In Egyptian Arabic, in order to be polite and express sincere gratitude to the hearer, the thanker uses one or more of the following strategies:

1) repetition, and 2) formulaic expressions, whether explicit mention of thanks, e.g. ('thanks a million', 'don't mention it') or 2) blessings, e.g. ('bless your hand', 'bless your heart', 'may God reward you') or other non- religious formulas including good wishes, e.g. ('may we hear good things about you') all of which result in a lengthy form and expressions of gratitude. It is important to note that there are different factors that

affect the thanker's choice of any or all of these strategies, such as the thanker's age, gender and social distance with the hearer.

In regards to the responses to the thanking expressions, the data shows that the hearer uses several strategies in responding to the thanker, such as 1) acceptance of the thanking, 2) denial of the favor, 3) commenting on the thanking with a compliment, and 4) offering future help.

There are three important variables that play a major role and have a significant effect on the choice of the thanking and response form: Age, gender and social distance.

In regards to the age variable, the data shows three age group categories: The first category: ranges from 20 to 30 years old and represented in 10 examples as 12.3% of my data. The second category of 30 to 40 years old is represented in 45 examples of my data, and the third category of 50 years and above is represented in 26 examples.

The data shows that the third category (50 years and above) produces more lengthy forms than the other two categories. This age group uses more blessings in their thanking or in their responses in thanking others. Out of the 26 examples of this category, 21 examples include repetitive blessings and redundancy, which result in lengthy forms of gratitude. It is interesting to note that when older people thank younger people, the latter frequently answer in a length that matches with the thanking length in order to positively acknowledge and respect the older person. In contrast, the hearer's response frequently doesn't match with that of the thanker in situations where the interlocutors are from the same age group.

It is also interesting that Egyptians usually appreciate and value the blessings and prayers that are produced by older people and sometimes perceive them very positively, as seen in 14, where the doctor responds to the old lady's thanking by saying "those beautiful blessings are all I need". The word *Hag & haga* are terms of respectful address for age group approximately 55 and above older age male or female in order to show them respect, while it is normal for age group 60 and above to call unrelated younger people, (*ibni* 'son or *binti* 'daughter') even if it is a formal situation and with social distance.

In regards to the gender, the data includes 37 examples of female-female interaction, 24 examples of female-male interaction, and 20 examples of male-male interaction. 100% of the examples show that females produce lengthier forms of thanking and responses to thanking than males either by the use of more blessings, or repetition of the thanking.

In regards to the blessings, the data show that of 37 examples of female- female interaction, 70.2% (26) examples include repetitive blessings, while of the 20 examples male-male interaction, only 35% (7) examples only include the use of repetitive blessings.

It is also important to note that in female-female interaction, sometimes the thanker and the giver take more than one turn than the female –male or the male-male interaction. Of the 37 examples of female-female interaction, 19 involve more than one turn each in thanking and responding. Of the 24 examples of female-male interaction,

only 2 involve taking more than one turn in thanking, and of the 20 examples of male-male interaction, only 4 examples involve taking turns.

In female- male interaction, the thanking and the response are usually shorter than the female- female thanking, and in the former situations, the female uses lengthier forms than the males together. In contrast, male-male interactions usually result in a shorter form of thanking than the female-female interactions.

In regards to the social distance variable, it is important to note that there are two kinds of situations in which the thanking takes place throughout the paper. First, formal and informal situations, in which the speakers know each other personally whether is close or distant, and second, situations in which there is a little to no personal social relationship to start with and the thanker and the giver may not even know each other's name, such as service encounters.

Regarding the social distance variable in which the interlocutors know each other already, the analysis of my data shows similar findings to that of Eisenstein & Bodman (1986) for English, that the latter found a correlation between the length of the thanking and the social distance between interlocutors and that the shorter thanking episodes sometimes reflect greater social distance between the speaker and the addressee. Similarly in Egyptian Arabic, my data shows that the closer the social relationship, the shorter the thanking forms, and that Egyptian Arabic uses more lengthier form of thanking with people with whom there is greater distance, however, this also depends on the situation itself.

In cases such as service encounters or in a grocery store between the clerk and the customer, where there is no acquaintance between the interlocutors, the thanking form is quite rather short and includes only the most basic formulaic thanking expression (*shukran gazelan* ‘thanks a lot’ or *alf shukr* ‘thanks a million’).

To summarize the above analysis, expressing gratitude in Egyptian Arabic may serve more than one function, such as appreciation of benefit, expressions of indebtedness, opening and closing a conversation, and leave taking.

According to my data, Egyptian Arabic uses repetition, blessings, routine formulaic expressions and apology phrases to express their gratitude, which can result in a lengthy form of thanking and response to thanking. Although these lengthy forms of thanking used to express sincere gratitude, ironically, speakers of other languages might perceive them as “overfriendliness” (Behm, 2008, 26) and therefore insincere forms.

Limitations and implications for future research:

There are two limitations that need to be addressed regarding the present study. The first concerns the number of speakers and the second one relates to the place of residence of the population. In further studies it is recommended to include more subjects from different gender and age groups could be added. The second limitation concerns the fact that the studied is living population living in a foreign country (the U.S.) and that in theory, at least, this could affect how they expressing gratitude. In further research, it

would be interesting to investigate the same speech act in Egypt and with a large number of speakers and tokens.

Chapter Six

References

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